



**Baltimore City Landmark Designation  
Grand Masonic Temple  
Aka: Grand Lodge of Maryland Masonic Temple  
221-227 North Charles Street  
Baltimore, Maryland**

**January 13, 2009**

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### **Historical Significance:**

The Masonic Temple is significant in local architectural history as a good example, in part, of the Renaissance Revival style and for its fine mansard roof and dormers in the Beaux-Arts influenced Classical Revival style. The transition between the two styles is carefully composed so that the later addition is not immediately apparent. The Temple is also significant as once being the main headquarters of the Masonic Lodge of Maryland. Although not the original building of the Masons, the former Temple was symbolic as one of the first points of reunion for Masons from both north and south after the Civil War. The importance of the Temple in this respect was emphasized by the presence of President Andrew Johnson at the cornerstone laying ceremony on November 20, 1866. Even though the Masons used many other locations around the area to meet, the Grand Masonic Temple was reserved for its most important events and rites. The Temple was designated as a contributing structure to the Cathedral Historic National Register historic district in 1987.

The history of the Masonic movement is best described in this passage by noted architectural historian James Dilts: The Modern Masonic order began in a London alehouse, where the first Grand Lodge was organized in 1717; the first Masonic Temple opened in Baltimore on the site of the Mitchell Courthouse in 1822. The Masons laid the cornerstone for the Washington Monuments and the B & O Railroad. This organization which built this temple traces its origins to the Middle Ages, when master masons were the guardians of the closely held secrets of proportion and structure that were necessary to build the great Gothic cathedrals of Europe. As the age of church building passed and the power of the guilds waned, the Freemasons began to admit outsiders, known as Accepted Masons. The building fraternity was gradually transformed into a fraternal organization, construction secrets became the secrets of initiation and membership, and the end product, rather than religious monuments was now philanthropy.

Acquired by the Tremont Suites hotel in 1998 the Temple was restored and reopened in 2005 as the Tremont Grand, by the architectural firm of Murphy and Dittenhafer. The restoration cost \$27 million to complete.

### **Architectural Description:**

The five-bay seven-story high facade is divided above the first floor storefronts by composite paneled pilasters. The windows in each bay are tightly organized in vertical groups of three with the topmost an arched 1/1 window and the other two vertically linked by consoles and entablatures. The first cornice has modillions and dentils. Above this cornice is the section rebuilt after the 1908 fire in a Beaux-Arts Classical Revival style. A slate mansard roof has an elaborate pedimented dormer and has copper coping. The top floor has groups of rectangular windows. The 1909 rebuilding also included a new main entrance with a semi-circular pedimented doorway ornamented with a heraldic shield.

The building also holds 10 of what has been described as the most awe-inspiring interiors in the city of Baltimore. According to Dilts: the current headquarters was designed by Edmund G. Lind, architect of the Peabody Library. The lower three levels of his façade survived the Christmas fire of 1890 and January fire of 1908. The initial rebuilding was by Joseph E. Sperry and Charles L. Larson, the latter a nationally known Romanesque Revival architect who designed the old Central Savings Bank. The second redesign was by Sperry alone, who is best known for the Bromo Seltzer Tower and Belvedere Terrace.

**Staff Recommendations:**  
**For Baltimore City Landmark**

Masonic Temple meets the following criteria:

- 1) *dates from a particular period having a significant character, interest, or value, as part of the development, heritage, or culture of the City of Baltimore*

Period of Significance: 1869-1958

- 2) *is associated with the life of an outstanding historical person or persons*

Numerous Baltimore citizens who were member of the Masonic Order.

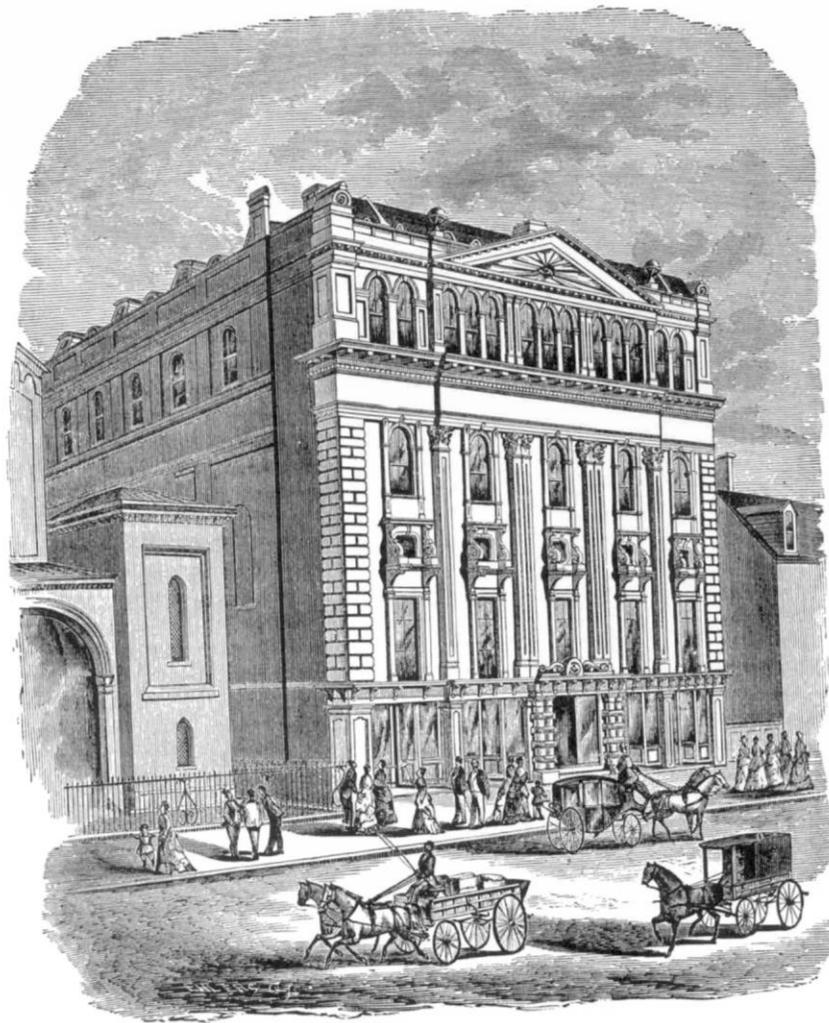
- 4) *is significant of the architectural period in which it was built and has distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style, method of construction, or engineering, or is the notable work of a master builder, designer, engineer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age;*

1869 Edmund G. Lind, 1893 Carson & Sperry, 1909 Joseph E. Sperry

- 5) *contributes information of historical, cultural, or social importance relating to the heritage of the community.*

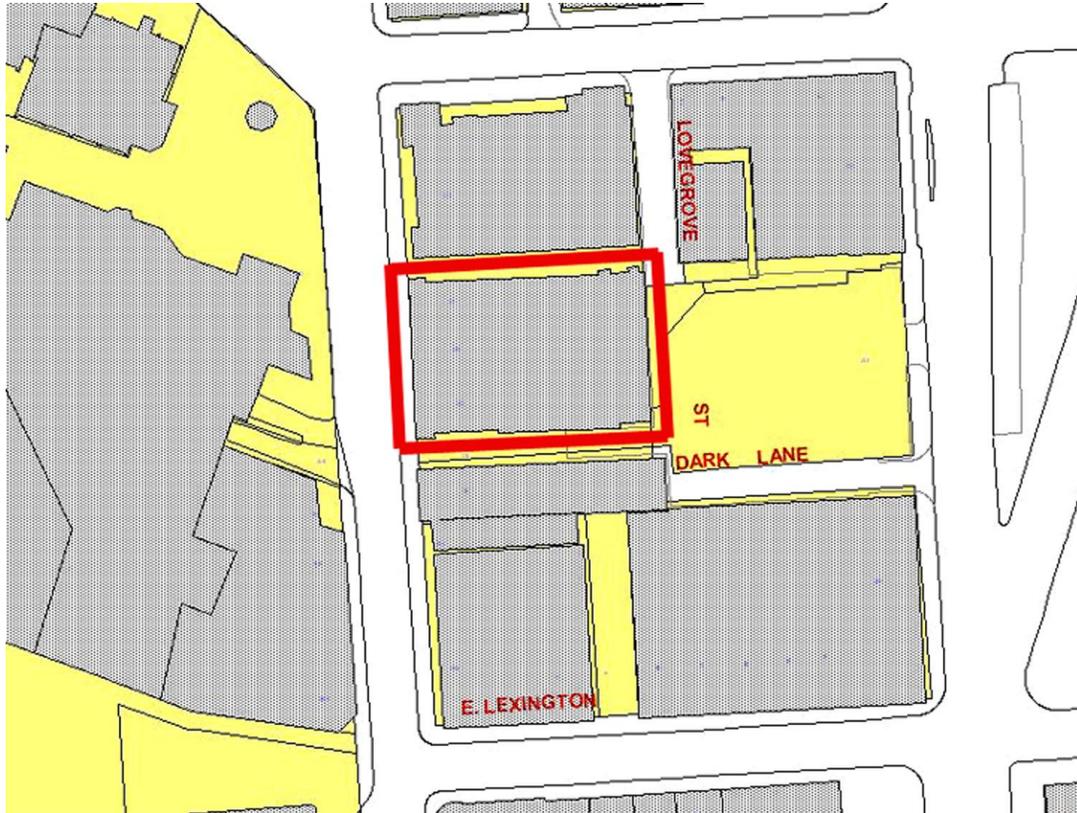
Social and philanthropic achievements of the Grand Masonic Temple Lodge of Maryland in the construction and development of Baltimore.

**Historic Images and Maps:**



MASONIC TEMPLE.

**Site Plan and Aerial Views:**



**Aerial View**



North Elevation



West Elevation



**Architectural Details:**

